NORTHANTS
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I thought my MBE was tax demand!

BY NICHOLAS BIEBER
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A shellshocked social worker from Northants thought she had received a tax demand when an important letter was posted to her - only to find it was an MBE.

Beverley Williams, from Kettering, has been recognised in the Queen's New Year Honours List for her services to the social work profession in England.

The 53-year-old has become well known as the founder of the prestigious Social Worker Awards in 2011, which was set up to recognise the achievements of social workers.

Talking about the moment she found out she was getting an MBE, she said: "When I saw the white letter on my doorstep with the word 'cabinet' on it my first thought was 'is this a letter from the tax office?' When I opened it, low and behold, it said that I was in the New Year Honours List!

"I couldn't stop screaming for about two minutes! It still hasn't sunk in now. I feel so honoured, privileges and very blessed to receive this."

See full list of county people honoured on page 7.

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#snapjustice

Email pictures to: news@HPnorthants.co.uk **Pictures used anonymously**

#Snapjustice is proving popular in the paper and online.

Here is a picture sent in by an angry Northants *Herald & Post* reader of a van blocking the pathway in Wellingborough Road in Northampton town centre making it a tight squeeze for pedestrians.

As part of the Northants *Herald & Post's* #snapjustice campaign readers are being asked to send in pictures of bad parking and other gripes which might bother you. If you are frustrated by inconsiderate behaviour then take a picture of it on your phone.

You can tweet it to us @NorthamptonUK using #snapjustice, send it to us via Facebook at NorthantsHeraldPost or you can email it to us at news@hpnorthants.co.uk

text 2 text

PC Dave Lee, road policing officer for Northants Police

Where is your favourite spot in the world?

Florida - it's an awesome place. I go in October every year - the family love it!

What is your favourite sandwich?

It has got to be ham and tomato ketchup with salad

What is your most favourite film?

RoboCop

What was your favourite Christmas present this year?

Probably the $200 I've been given to use for the holiday in Florida!

What is the happiest day of your life?

When my daughter was born

What is your New Year's resolution?

To live life everyday and live for now

When was the last time you cried?

My wife's nan's funeral

What was the last thing you lost?

I actually don't know, I always try not to lose things - I'm good at that.

Editor's Letter

Change is coming this year, are you ready to take part?

There's little doubt that the wind has changed Mary Poppins style.

This time next year a lot of things in Northamptonshire and perhaps across the country, will be very different.

It is a General Election year.

The new policy of fixed government terms means we know it will happen in May. In theory the media and the politicians should be offering up the slickest and most engaging battle for our votes the nation has ever seen.

I'm smiling as I type that.

Actually the electoral war machines are already running. UKIP is placing adverts in this newspaper. This does not mean the Herald and Post favours that party any more than publicising council leader David Mackintosh's New Year's Message means we are a Conservative newspaper.

Anyone is free to place an advert until about a month before the election itself when we will take a tighter rein on the political material in an attempt to maintain fairness and balance.

One group whose collective voice should be louder than ever is the voters.

> ‘ If you have a view, you can write a piece on our website or start a thread on our forums ’

Facebook and Twitter are the new town square.

If you have a view or a point to make, or even if you just want to let off steam, you can write a piece on our website or start a thread on our forums. Go to the Get Involved tab.

Good ideas are getting discovered and shared like this all over the internet every day.

Aside from whatever change in the political landscape big changes are on the way in terms of how services are delivered.

Various council functions will be transforming into services run by something more like private companies.

We are being told this is more efficient but it could mean public money disappearing into places it cannot be tracked.

Don't let it happen. You share what you know, we'll share what we know and between us we should keep Northamptonshire running smoothly for another year at least!

Thanks for reading. Have a good year,

Steve Scoles

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bin lorry crash

A 65-year-old man has died following a collision on the A6 in Burton Latimer.

The man was driving a black Ford Mondeo towards Kettering on Monday when he collided with a bin lorry travelling towards Finedon.

No to wind farm

Plans for a wind farm to be built in the south of Northants have been rejected.

Communities secretary, Eric Pickles MP, last week blocked plans for five, 125m high wind turbines to be built at Spring Farm Ridge.

UB40 concert

Legendary British reggae band UB40 will perform in Northampton this summer.

The Red Red Wine singers will perform at Royal & Derngate on Wednesday, June 3. Tickets cost £30. Call 01604 624811 to book.

Church targeted

Vandals damaged the roof of St Helen's Church in Great Oxendon when they climbed onto the building in an attempt to steal lead - only to find it didn't have any.

The church was targeted between December 17 and 24.

Raider in town

YouTube sensation the Wealdstone Raider was set to appear at Barratts Club in Northampton last night as a special celebrity guest.

He was expected to join revellers for the venue's New Year's Eve celebrations.

Police rescue mother-to-be

BY NICHOLAS BIEBER
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RELIEF: The woman had been stuck in traffic before she was rescued

A pregnant woman was given a police escort to Northampton General Hospital after she became stuck in traffic while in labour.

The woman, who has not yet be named, was stranded on the A45 after a bus caught fire between Riverside and Barnes Meadow shortly after 9am on Saturday.

The blaze caused traffic chaos and left diesel spilling across the carriageway, leading to the road being closed for two hours.

The panic-stricken mum-to-be then decided to ring the police for help and got through to call handler PC Dave Lee, who answered her prayers by sending a patrol car to escort her to hospital.

PC Lee, a road traffic officer for Northants Police, said: "We don't usually send out patrol cars to escort pregnant women to hospital, that's for sure!

"It depends on the nature of the incident, but in this case I just felt as we had another car nearby, it was the quickest and best option."

After the officers dropped the expectant mother at hospital, one of them sent PC Lee a picture of the woman to post on Twitter. To their surprise, it went viral and hit national headlines.

PC Lee added: "The reaction was amazing. I knew it would get a bit of interest, but not this much! I am still overwhelmed by it now to be honest."

Plates removed to make car 'cool'

A driver removed the front numberplate of his car to make the vehicle look 'cool', a police officer has revealed.

Cops stopped the driver in Northampton town on Tuesday morning after spotting the car was missing its number plate.

PC Dave Lee, of the Road Policing Unit at Northants Police, said: "Just stopped a vehicle for having no front numberplate. The usual excuse is that it has just fallen off.

"This driver was really honest and said the numberplate didn't fall off. He took it off.

"Reason - it makes the car look cool."

The driver was reported for the incident and is likely to be given a fine.

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First glimpse inside new railway station

Herald reporter NICHOLAS BIEBER takes a look around the new £20m railway station for Northampton two weeks ahead of its opening

The wait is nearly over for the launch of Northampton's new railway station.

The £20m building will open its doors on January 12 welcoming passengers to a premises that spans two floors and is double the size of its predecessor.

Its facilities will include a ticketing hall on the first floor comprising three self-service machines and three kiosks.

The first floor also has a 27-seat waiting area and 10 ticket gates which is expected to see millions of passengers pass through every year.

There will also be four new shops added to the station in the near future, including a WHSmith and Starbucks on the first floor and a Coffee Republic and Enterprise car rental outlet on the ground floor.

Peter Tilley, station manager, said: "I'm delighted we have secured a date to move into the new station.

"The new building is lighter, brighter and much better equipped to meet the needs of our customers and staff. The layout of the station means there is better access for all and the additional ticket gates will really make a difference, reducing queuing times during the morning and evening peak.

"A huge amount of work is taking place behind the scenes to prepare for the opening.

"Effectively we are now managing two stations and will be working day and night to co-ordinate the move into the new building.

"It's great that we can now confirm the opening date and I look forward to welcoming passengers to the new station in the new year."

IMPRESSIVE: The new station is twice the size of the old one, covering 2,500 square metres

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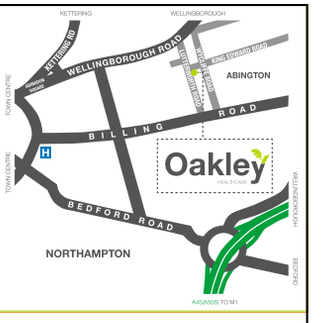

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Top 5

Easy wins for losing weight in New Year

Everyone is talking about getting in shape, we looked for the bare minimum you could do . . .

1 Sometimes, if you really want a coffee or a tea but there's no sugar, you will have it without won't you? You can see where we're going with this... one or two spoons of sugar, every time you have a hot beverage? Cut them out, you will get used to it.

2 Stairs not lifts. Losing weight is not rocket science. If you burn more calories than you consume your body will dip into its saved up calories (your body fat) to balance the books. If you've got a choice, go the long way... on foot.

3 Give your tummy muscles a squeeze right now as you're reading this. Hold it until you get to the end of the paragraph. Tighter than that. Like you're being tickled. Nearly there. And relax. Easy? Do another nine.

4 Do breakfast. Too many of us leave it until that lovely sandwich man comes round the office. The people who had cereal first thing kick started their metabolism (the calorie incinerator) at least two hours before you did. That's why they're so smug.

5 Don't be stupid. If you really want to change your body there are no shortcuts. You need to adopt rules and a routine you can live with forever. Eat right mostly, have treats and find some exercise that fits. Get a bicycle. Bicycles are cool.

Alert: suspicious knockers about

BY NICHOLAS BIEBER
nicholas.bieber@hpnorthants.co.uk

The so-called "Nottingham Knockers" have struck in Northamptonshire.

The sometimes aggressive callers carry huge black holdalls and claim to be ex-offenders on a probation scheme. But there are no such schemes and any ID they may show is usually not official.

This type of incident is on the rise in towns and cities across the country, and once such incident was spotted in Northamptonshire this month.

Last week, PCSOs from the 'futures' team were patrolling in Woodnewton when they came across a man doorstep selling in the village.

After speaking to the man, a fake pedlars licence and various property were found and subsequently confiscated.

Inspector Julie Mead said: "Wherever you live, please be aware of this and don't be tempted to buy from the doorstep or feel pressured by salespeople offering supposedly one-off 'buy it now' low prices.

"Also, please keep a look out for any suspicious activity and keep an eye on neighbours properties if they're away over Christmas and the New Year, as these groups may be using the excuse of door-to-door selling to get a closer look, with a view to identifying properties to burgle.

"If you're suspicious of any salesperson that calls at your house, please call 101."

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Managing Director Trevor Skidmore feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 10 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done. We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service the Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough & Corby areas and Trevor is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Trevor a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he'll be happy to help!

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White Boxing Day. . .

SNOW WORRY: Jake making snowballs and below, a driver travels through the wintry conditions

First winter snow falls on Northants

Northamptonshire saw the first snowfall of the winter on Boxing Day followed by sub-zero temperatures and ice.

The snow arrived during the evening on December 26 as children across the county rushed outside to make the most of it, including four-year-old Jake Jeffery (*pictured*), from Towcester, who made his first snowballs.

Unfortunately for some, the snow didn't last for long enough, but fear not as winter isn't over just yet. . .

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World's first hybrid plane ready for take off

ON TOP OF THE WORLD: The plane performed a serious of 'hops' on the runway before taking off on a flight at 1,500ft

The world's first hybrid plane that can recharge itself mid-flight has been successfully tested at Sywell Aerodrome.

The aircraft has been created by a team at Cambridge University, working with Boeing, who carried out the maiden flight at the airfield on December 23.

They hope that the plane will be able to provide new forms of cleaner, low-carbon air travel.

During the tests the plane performed a series of 'hops' along the runway, before a flight at more than 1,500 feet.

But passengers won't be able to board a hybrid plane any time soon, as a jetline would only be able to stay airborne for 10 minutes.

Hybrid engines combine a battery and a petrol engine.

The petrol engine works with the battery-powered one at take-off and climb (when the plane needs extra power), but the electric motor can then switch into generator mode and recharge the batteries.

Nine county heroes in New Year Honours List

BY NICHOLAS BIEBER
nicholas.bieber@hpnorthants.co.uk

Nine people from Northamptonshire have been named on the Queen's New Year Honours list.

■ David Reynolds, farmer and director of Camgrain, has been chosen to be made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his services to Agriculture and the community in the East Midlands.

■ Joan Mary Tice, a horse trainer from Teeton, has been selected to receive an OBE for her charitable services through the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, of which she has been a trustee of for over 50 years.

■ Beverley Anne Williams, 53, of Kettering, the founder of the Social Worker of the Year Awards, will be made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for her services to the Social Work Profession in England.

■ Deborah Jane Withers, 63, a recently retired headteacher for Wren Spinney Special School in Kettering, has been chosen to receive an MBE for her services to Education.

She set up a sweet shop in Kettering which is the first in the country to be run by disabled children.

■ Angela Doughty, of Walgrave, will be made an MBE for her services to children with Special Needs through the Riding for the Disabled Trust.

■ Sally Ann Smith, Honorary Secretary of the Conservative Agents Benevolent Fund, will receive an MBE for political service.

She has dedicated her hard work to over 50 years of General Election campaigns.

■ Franklin Christopher Boucher, 78, a volunteer for the Royal National Institute of Blind People, has been selected to receive a Medal of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for his services to the Blind and Partially Sighted.

■ Robert Arthur Denton, 76, of Kettering, will receive a BEM for his services to the community in Rothwell.

■ Geoffrey Roy Spokes, a recently retired Watch Manager at Long Buckby Fire Station, will receive a BEM for his services to the community in Long Buckby.

He has worked at the station, which he lives right next to, for over 40 years.

Read more on our website.

Masked men raid A45 petrol station and flee with cash

A petrol station was raided by a gang of three masked men who forced a member of staff to lie on the floor.

The robbery took place at the Esso service station on the A45 near Earls Barton, in the early hours of Tuesday, December 30.

Three men entered the shop on the eastbound carriageway between 12.10am and 12.20am through the front door, before threatening a member of staff and forcing him to lie on the floor.

They then stole cash and cigarettes, which they put into a large bulk-bag, before making their escape through the back door.

All three were wearing dark clothing, balaclavas and gloves.

Police have asked anyone with information to call them on 101.

Boy knocked out in fast food restaurant by a dad

A boy who accidentally bumped into a girl in a fast food restaurant was knocked out by her dad.

The 14-year-old was in the Sixfields branch of McDonald's between 5pm and 6pm on Sunday, December 28 when he bumped the girl and knocked her over.

In retaliation, the girl's father punched the boy, knocking him unconscious and leaving him with a swollen nose, bruised eye, blurred vision and a bump on the back of the head.

The man was white, in his mid to late 20s and between 6ft 1in and 6ft 2in. He had slightly tanned skin, short black hair and stubble. He was wearing jeans, trainers and either a grey or a blue hoodie.

Police have asked witnesses to call 101.

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FIRE DRAMA: Over 30 firefighters battled the blaze in the town centre for over 90 minutes

Four arrests made after major blaze in Corby

Four people have been arrested following a major fire at the Willow Place car park in Corby town centre.

Over 30 firefighters were called to the scene at 6.15pm on Tuesday to battle the blaze which lasted for over 90 minutes.

The fire left behind extensive damage to the exterior walls of the car park, but the structure itself is believed to be safe and the blaze did not spread into the main shopping area.

There were no serious injuries reported. One person was treated for smoke inhalation.

After the fire, police arrested four people - two teenage boys, aged 14 and 17 and two men, aged 19 and 20 - on suspicion of arson. However, they believe other people may also have been involved and are appealing for witnesses.

The cause of the fire is still being investigated.

Axe-hit City Link staff offered jobs

BY NICHOLAS BIEBER
nicholas.bieber@hpnorthants.co.uk

A delivery company is offering a lifeline to axe-hit City Link workers in and around the county.

Northamptonshire-based Panther Warehousing is offering up to 100 new jobs to employees at City Link who were made redundant on New Year's Eve following the news on Christmas Day that it had collapsed into administration.

The move by City Link, which comes after 'years of substantial losses', saw 2,356 jobs axed nationwide yesterday, of which 42 are in Northampton.

The news has prompted Crick-based delivery firm Panther Warehousing to step forward and make a rallying call to the dozens of workers.

The company, which offers white-glove, two-man or one-man assisted deliveries of large or delicate items, says it is looking for up to 100 self-employed and employed drivers (50 two-man teams) across the UK together with up to 40 general customer service and warehouse staff.

Colin McCarthy, Panther Warehousing's managing director, said: "Whilst the parcels industry struggles with ever-increasing operating costs and tightening profit margins, the two-man market continues to thrive as consumers become more and more comfortable with purchasing both larger and big ticket items online such as garden furniture, beds and white and brown goods.

"If we are to continue to develop and take advantage of the growth it is essential we have the necessary resource in place. It is therefore essential that we have a good pool of drivers and a network of strategic sites and we are pleased to be in a position to further increase our workforce at this difficult time."

For further information about the opportunities at Panther Warehousing email hr@panthergroup.co.uk.

To read the latest on the City Link situation in Northamptonshire visit our website at www.northampton-news-hp.co.uk

Have your Say
Go to www.northampton-news-hp.co.uk

'Nightmare' roadworks to return with lane closures

Work on Northampton's Gas Street Roundabout will start again on Monday, January 5, following the Christmas break.

From this date the traffic signals will be turned off to allow for new lights and cabling need to be installed.

While work is taking place, the roundabout will operate as a conventional roundabout (where motorists have to follow give way signs) as opposed to a traffic light controlled junction.

See more details in the full story on our website.

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Jade dog

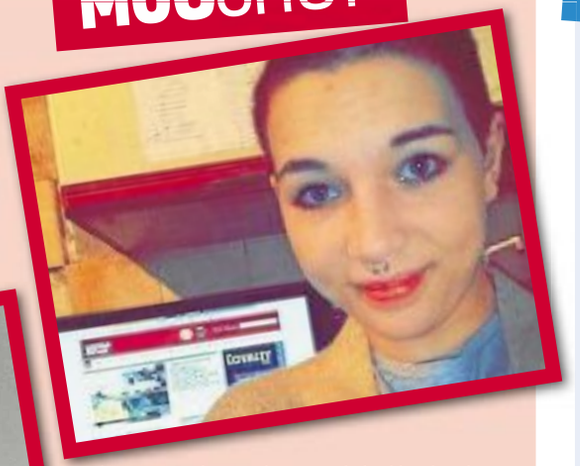
The station manager of Northampton railway station, Peter Tilley, must always have his jade dog charm on him.

He said: "I never leave home without my jade dog charm, it brings good fortune my way."

He will be hoping the good fortune keeps on giving when he moves into the new railway station in January!

Herald & Post

MUGSHOT



Cheyenne Jackson, who recently had her head shaved for charity, takes time out of her busy day to read the *Northants Herald & Post* online at www.northampton-news-hp.co.uk

Cheyenne, 18, who works at outdoor equipment shop Trespass at Weston Favell Shopping Centre, waved goodbye to her hair in November to raise money for Cancer Research UK in memory of her grandma who died from bone cancer last Christmas. Read the story online.

NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

David Mackintosh

David Mackintosh is the leader of the ruling Conservative group on Northampton Borough Council

2014 has been a year of celebration and commemoration, highlighting our rich heritage and achievements – it has also been a year of growth and setting the foundations for success in future years.

"The regeneration of our town has continued as Northampton Alive projects have progressed at pace. This year we agreed an end to the development agreement with Legal&General, putting the future of Greyfriars back in our hands, and when it is demolished in the next few months we will have four acres of land in a prime town centre location to redevelop.

The expansion of all three professional sports clubs is moving ahead, and our athletics club will soon have a fantastic new facility at Moulton College. The town's transport infrastructure has been improved and work is nearing completion on the new railway station which opens in a few weeks.

We have focused on making Northampton a place that people want to visit and that businesses want to be a part of. Our town centre has seen more people visiting and shopping thanks to expanding our free parking offer to include Saturdays and two hours free during the week. The reopening of Abington Street is already seeing more people using that part of the town centre.

And we have organised regular entertainment in the summer and at Christmas, including a traditional German market. We also launched a Love Northampton App to help promote local attractions and offers, as well as giving our town centre businesses support to reach customers.

Our Business Incentive Scheme has been huge success. In just 9 months we have invested over £300,000 in helping almost 40 local businesses and entrepreneurs.

See more on website

You can submit blogs or articles to us at any time via the Get Involved tab on our website

YourLetters

CONCERN: Cllr Gareth Eales with some of the waste and inset, part of the 'obstacle course'

Bin collectors left behind obstacle of broken bins

A letter to Northampton Borough Council:

I, Cllr Gareth Eales, am contacting you on behalf of the number of constituents who call me and/or knock my door complain about the manner in which Enterprise approached recycling collections on Sunday across the Spencer Ward.

The recycling boxes were not placed outside the homes they emanated from - they were strewn all over the pavement causing an impromptu obstacle course, which resulted in an elderly constituent tripping over.

Also, there has been a number of complaints that boxes are being broken by the force in which they are thrown about, replacements will only cost public money and there has been some accounts of minor accidental damage to parked motor-vehicles with boxes being bashed into them.

All of the above is wholly unacceptable and not what the people of Spencer or Northampton deserve or expect. Can I please ask that NBC emphasise to our service provider the level of service and professionalism we expect and give me and my constituents reassurances that there will be a marked improvement in service delivery?

Council response: Both the borough council and our contractor Enterprise are keen to ensure that recycling boxes are returned safely to the path so that the pavement is not obstructed and the boxes themselves are not damaged. It also costs Enterprise money every time they have to replace a damaged box. We will speak to Enterprise about the issues raised and ask them to reinforce the message that boxes and bins need to be put

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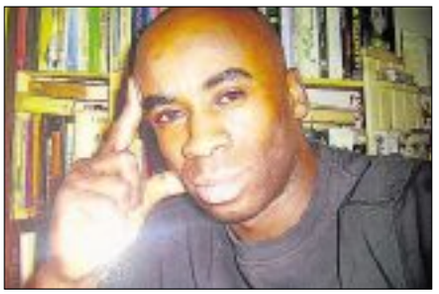

WANTED: Police want to speak to Winston Reid

Man wanted after serious sex attack

Police are seeking 52-year-old Winston Anthony Reid in connection with an alleged serious sexual assault and an alleged violent assault.

Reid, who also uses the name Malik Shabazz and the date of birth 1972, is believed to be living in Wellingborough. He also has links with Northampton, Kettering, Leicester and historically has connections with London and the West Midlands.

Clarke is facing a motoring charge

BY STEVE SCOLES
news@hpnorthants.co.uk

Clarke Carlisle was arrested for failing to provide a breath specimen just days before he was hit by a lorry in Yorkshire.

Former Northampton Town skipper Clarke was charged with a drink driving offence two days before being struck by the vehicle, it emerged this week.

The 35-year-old was involved in the serious collision on the A64 on December 22 and remains in hospital in Leeds.

A Metropolitan Police statement said: "Clarke Carlisle, 35, was charged on Saturday, December 20 with failing to provide a specimen and driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence.

"He is due to appear at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court on January 20, 2015."

Carlisle has received an outpouring of support from the footballing world following the news of his accident.

His wife Gemma tweeted yesterday: "Thank you for continuing messages of support and for media restraint. Clarke still very poorly but we're hopeful he'll make a full recovery."

The defender featured for the Cobblers between 2012 and 2013, with the Sixfields outfit being his last club before retirement. Fans gave a minute's applause in support before Saturday's game.

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FEEL GOOD FACTOR

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Changing for the better . . .

LOCKED ON: Your padlock needs to fit these locks

H&P Editor Steve Scoles continues on his quest for fitness and health

Users of the former municipal gymnasium on the Mounts have a genuine cause to celebrate the festive season.

The gym changing rooms were closed for refurbishment right up to Christmas which meant using the pool changing rooms.

They are nice changing rooms but the showers are pool showers. They are basically there as additional wetness for people who are about to be or already are wet.

Pool showers everywhere are a fig leaf to distract from the unspoken truth that swimmers really get clean in the pool.

You're half an hour doing lengths but as quick as you can be in the shower. If the stubborn sock fluff is coming off anywhere, it's coming off in the deep end, not in the pool showers.

Gym-side showers are a whole different kettle of sweat.

They're all about getting yourself presentable enough for society again. By comparison the pool side showers are a feeble baptism with what you might call a simulation of a shower of water. More of a tribute than the real thing.

During the refurbishment I eventually gave up on the pool showers and took the sweat home to shower there (and no-one in our house thinks we've got a good shower).

So back in the gym for training after Christmas I was eagerly anticipating the new look changing rooms. I actually was. I'm a little shocked at that myself.

The big news is that the terrible magnetic wrist band locker system has gone. It has been replaced with a padlock system (buy one for £5 from the gym or bring your own but make sure it's got longish upright bars on its U bend).

I'm so pleased about this. The worst experience I had with the lockers was having to go to the front desk in my trunks to get someone to open mine when my wristband stopped working. It was a couple of years ago so everyone's over it now but I felt badly let down.

See updates online
Go to www.northampton-news-hp.co.uk

The shower area is now divided into cubicles and partially walled off. It used to be just a row of shower heads in a way that gave us blokes probably too much credit for being unselfconscious and blokey about being naked in front of others. I think the wristbands gave me too much credit for that too.

I have to say I'm delighted with the new look changing rooms and I've already got a padlock that fits the lockers, so there's a fiver saved.

Now all I need to do is make sure I don't forget the combination or I'll be out the front in my trunks again asking for bolt croppers...

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New Year's tradition continues at Easton

BY STEVE SCOLES
news@hpnorthants.co.uk

The Grafton Hunt rode out at Easton Neston Hall on Boxing Day.

Easton Neston used to be owned by Lord Hesketh but is now the home of superich Russian fashion designer Leon Max.

However the tradition of the Boxing Day hunt continues with all the associated pageantry of hounds and horses.

The hunt was legal but the activity still polarises opinion.

On our Facebook site some commenters were pleased to see the event take place, however others registered their disapproval.

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FOXTROTTING: The Grafton Hunt rode out from Easton Neston Hall on Boxing Day. Owner Leon Max (below) watched the spectable with his wife.

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LOCAL WORLD

HELPING YOU TO PLAN YOUR YEAR AHEAD

14 Money Saving Ideas

You know that bit in Die Hard, when Bruce Willis escapes the huge exploding corridor of flames? Well, that's what our bank accounts feel like as we escape from December 2014, broke and badly singed. "Would you like to see your on screen balance?", "Oh heavens, NO."

Here are 14 ways to save some money and try to recover from the dreaded month of awful expense.

1. Take your lunch to work.
On average we spend nearly £8 a day on lunch at work and over a lifetime that could add up to £90,000. Yes Tupperware and wrapping things in tin foil feels like a lot of effort but take a marmite sandwich or some leftovers to the office and you'll soon notice the extra cash in your pocket.

2. Quit the gym.
Yes we know it's the time of year when everyone is joining the gym not quitting it, but why not buck the trend? Instead of pounding the treadmill, go for a free jog. Instead of the bike machine, just go for a ride on your bike. Instead of doing sit ups at the gym, ever thought of doing your sit ups…in your house?

3. Sell things on eBay.
The popular auction site provides lots of advice on how you can generate a £20K+ living just by selling things like designer clothes from TK Maxx or items from car boot sales.

4. Say "No".
Let's practise now, "Do you want to go out for dinner on Thursday with X?", "No". "Do you want to come on a group holiday with X, X and X?", "No", "Do you want to chip in for the gift for X?", "No". See, that was so easy and you've just saved about £1000.

5. Swap the cinema for the library.
The cinema is very expensive and even more so now Orange Wednesdays is coming to an end. Why not watch movies in your head by reading a free book from the Central Library?

6. Plan your meals.
Never go to the supermarket when you're feeling hungry or you'll just come home with ham and pies. Make a shopping list and buy ingredients for five or six dinners, ideally ones that will last two days, or things you can take to work for lunch. See how this is all falling beautifully into place?

7. Online discount codes.
When you get to an online checkout, next to the space for your debit card details is usually a space saying 'Discount Code?' Don't just ignore it. Go to Google and search for a discount code and there's a good chance you'll get a whopping reduction.

8. Stop Smoking.
A pack of 20 smokes now costs the best part of £10 so if you light up 20 times a day, that's £3650 a year. Forget Bruce Willis in Die Hard. This colossal waste of money is more like Bruce Willis in Armageddon. BOOM.

9. Drive carefully.
Shift into neutral at the lights, turn off the engine when you stop for a few minutes and don't spend ages driving round and round looking for the perfect parking space. It'll all save the precious drops of fuel in your tank.

10. Grow your hair.
Of course hairdressers are going to tell you that it's life threatening not to get a trim every six to eight weeks, and that if you don't, your disgusting split ends will divide and wrap around your neck causing death by asphyxiation. Of course they would say that.

11. Re-Gift.
Did you get a lot of things for Christmas that you sort of liked but could live without? Graciously appreciate the lovely thought that went into those gifts and then secretly wrap them back up to pass them on to someone else.

12. Ditch the morning coffee.
As a nation we're totally addicted to our huge milky morning drinks made by friendly strangers. Make your own coffee at work instead and, as a country, we'll save £6.3bn a year.

13. Cut some TV channels.
If you're paying for an expensive TV package make sure it's really worth it. If you spend 90% of the time watching Channel 4 and only occasionally tune into Sky Movies maybe it's time to pull the plug.

14. Fight your corner.
If you get a parking ticket or a speeding ticket that you genuinely don't think you deserve then try appealing it. Appeal your bank charges too. There's always a chance

In 2013, this is how the average person spent £100:

Transport: £14.80 - Recreation and culture: £14.10

Housing, water, electricity, gas and fuel: £13.70 - Restaurants and hotels: £11.70

Food and non-alcoholic beverages: £10.60 - Miscellaneous goods and services: £10.30

Clothing and footwear: £6.80 - Furniture, household equipment and maintenance: £5.90

Alcoholic beverages and tobacco: £4.40 - Communication: £3.10

Health: £2.50 - Education: £2.10

Data from National Statistics. Source http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/news/article-2300017/More-money-going-basics-like-shelter-heating-transport.html

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HELPING YOU TO PLAN YOUR YEAR AHEAD

Top 40 New Year Resolutions

It's the very first week of 2015 and the perfect chance to make a nice fresh start. Here are 40 of the most common new year's resolutions in case you're looking for some some inspiration. (WARNING: It may be dangerous to attempt all 40 at the same time…)

1. Lose weight.
Not too much though. No one wants to see your pointy bones.

2. Get fit.
If you're tired of collapsing at the top of the stairs, now's the time to change.

3. Travel.
To a different country that is. Getting off your bus at a further away stop doesn't.

4. Quit smoking.
Help is available at camquit.nhs.uk. This time next year you could be all nice and smoke free.

5. Get a health check.
Put your mind at ease and get those worrying aches and pains checked out.

6. Listen to more music.
And stop shuffling your iTunes. Albums are made to be appreciated as a whole.

7. Dress better.
Uggs for work? Tracksuits round the house? You look more like Steptoe than Stella MacCartney. Smarten up your act in 2015.

8. Get a six pack.
Not of beers silly. Of massive stomach muscles.

9. Start a business.
You could very well be the next Cambridge Satchel Company.

10. Eat more healthily.
Five fruit and vegetables. Every. Single. Day.

11. Give up junk food.
You probably ate thousands of crisps in 2014. Millions. It's got to stop.

12. Stop judging people.
"Ooh I don't like her voice and she should never have left her husband…" Stop saying things like that.

13. Cut down on alcohol.
And keep an eye on those units. A small glass of wine is 2.3 units which is almost your entire daily allowance. Tell the truth now…

14. Get a girlfriend/boyfriend.
If you're looking for love hopefully you will find it in 2015.

15. Spend more time with your children.
Stop telling them to "SHHHH the news is on" and start listening to them instead.

16. Get more sleep.
In an average lifetime, a person sleeps for a total of 25 years. Obviously this is not nearly enough. Zzzz.

17. Start saving.
If you save just £1 a day then this time next year you'll have £365!

18. Keep in touch with friends.
Did you put, "Oh we simply must meet up in 2015!" in all your Christmas cards? Did you write the same thing last year? Break the chain of lying and actually do it.

19. Learn a language.
And really impress your friends by learning a weird language like Chalcatongo Mixtec (Mexico) or Choctaw (Oklahoma).

20. Stop eating sweets.
Or another common one is 'go to the dentist'. The two go hand in hand.

21. Give up video games.
If you've started forward rolling through town instead of walking and automatically hiding behind walls, then it's definitely gone too far.

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22. Budget your money.
Deduct your outgoings from your incomings and what you have left is… what you have left. Easy.

23. Take more risks.
Not risks like, not wearing a seatbelt in the car. Or calling your boss a <BLEEP>. Just maybe be a little more adventurous.

24. Back up your computer.
You'll only have yourself to blame if that blue screen comes on and you weren't prepared.

25. Smile more.
Try smiling at strangers in the street and see how many weird looks you get instead of reciprocal smiles.

26. Do more cultural activities.
The Fitzwilliam Museum is free entry so there is really no excuse not to go.

27. Drink more water.
What do you mean you don't like water? Just get it down. Eight whole glasses a day.

28. Give up Facebook.
Especially since now everyone's married and you don't even recognise their names anymore, let alone their faces. It's just a website full of strangers and it's taking over your life.

29. Buy a house.
The property ladder is long and the first rung is hopelessly high up, but it's worth a try.

30. Watch less TV.
Instead let's just…talk to each other. Oh no actually, that sounds awful. Where's the remote quick!?

31. Recycle.
Blue bins, green bins, brown bins, boxes, bags. Make sure you have your recycling routine down and help save the planet from unsorted rubbish.

32. Learn to cook.
There are around 430 hours of cooking programmes on TV every week so why do we always have the same three things for dinner?

33. Stop calling your Ex.
Do they ever call you? If the answer is a sorrowful "No", then it's time to press 'delete'.

34. Stop texting while driving.
Put your phone in the boot, in a box, with a lock on it.
Absurdly dangerous and illegal.

35. Start a blog or a YouTube channel.
How did 'Zoella' ever even happen? The internet is your oyster and if you have things to say, don't keep them to yourself. It's easy, free and will keep you off the streets.

36. Give to charity.
Your money, your old clothes or your time. It feels good to give back.

37. Read more.
Apparently 63% of men don't read books at all and prefer watching films instead.

38. Give up meat.
It's alleged that it's far kinder to animals not to eat them and much better for the environment. Also cutting down on eating red meat will keep you healthier.

39. Establish a 'Date night'.
Ideally with your spouse or partner to keep the flame alive. (Obviously don't just start dating other people).

40. Get a better job.
Don't waste your life doing something you hate.

Have you made any new year resolutions? Tell us what they are and then you'll have to stick them.

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HELPING YOU TO PLAN YOUR YEAR AHEAD

September Babies

If you want to give birth to a baby this September you have until (approximately) January 11th to conceive him or her.

Don't panic, but really even reading this article is wasting precious conception time. Although, is it really true what they say about people with autumn birthdays having the edge over people with summer birthdays, at school, and beyond?

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are expecting the latest little royal in April to join baby Prince George of Cambridge, who was born in July 2013, in the royal nursery. You might think that being born a royal is a pretty good start for a baby, but a spring or summer birthday, according to some research, is not as desirable as an autumn birthday and some studies suggest that being older for the school year gives a child a massive academic and physical advantage over their younger peers.

Why does the school year start in September and not in a month that makes more sense, like January, for example? Legend has it that the children of yesteryear needed the summer off in order to help their families harvest the arable crops, but things have changed. A September year start means, according to a study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies, that a child born in August, aside from never having anyone come to their birthday parties, will be 20% more likely to study for a vocational qualification, 20% less likely to get into Oxford or Cambridge university, will probably have lower socio-emotional development, lower confidence, lower academic ability and is 2.5 times more likely to say they were unhappy at school.

Author Malcom Gladwell says, in his 2008 publication Outliers, that this is all down to the fact that summer-borns are almost a full 12 months younger than their autumn-born classmates and in areas such as sports, this can make an enormous difference. Gladwell goes to great lengths to prove the theory by listing the birthdays of leading sports stars and leaves no doubt that summer-borns are always going to be the weedy ones at school who can't catch and never get picked for the team.

Lucy Hyde, teacher at Arbury Primary School, Cambridge and currently teaching at a leading primary in the UAE says, "The Gladwell phenomenon is more noticeable in children lower down the school (Early Years and Ks1| where there is often a clear difference in motor skills, maturity and in how they cope socially and interact with their peers. Ultimately, the gap tends to lessen as they progress through primary school and by the time they enter secondary education, the month they are born in doesn't seem to affect them.

Mary Martin who recently retired after 40 years as an English teacher at Comberton Village College agrees and says, "As always it's impossible to generalise and even when you have a list of the birthdays in front of you, it's definitely not what you focus on when first meeting the new Year Sevens." Mary continues, "Occasionally when looking at reading, writing, speaking and listening skills you might notice a slightly less advanced student turns out to be in the younger group, but crucially I think parents shouldn't feel any anxiety over their child's birth date. Nowadays, when people have children, they focus so much on stages of development and what should be happening, but the real key is to nurture children at home, build confidence, give affection, show care and pay attention to them. Things such as talking to your children, reading to them, telling them stories and repeating nursery rhymes are what really lays the foundation for literacy and academic skill in the long run."

Mary says, "Perhaps going back in time a little to the 1950s, parents were possibly less aware of how important the pre-school years are but now most parents are tuned into the importance of nursery education and the experience they offer the child at home. Birth date is definitely a factor, but you can certainly compensate for it and it shouldn't be a big deal."

If you're expecting a baby this summer, this will be reassuring news, but if you're still set on having a September genius child, remember... January 11th is your deadline.

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Your Health

All those Christmas treats can add up to a weighty problem - but don't be tempted by those celeb-endorsed fad diets as a quick New Year fix. Slow and steady wins the weight race, experts tell Lisa Salmon

It's all very well to eat, drink and be merry over Christmas - but you could have a heavy price to pay in the New Year.

It's estimated that the average person consumes an extra 500 calories per day over the festive period, equating to a possible 5lb weight gain.

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) is keen to help people avoid the unhealthy repercussions of Christmas excess.

"Christmas is, of course, a time for lots of fun and special foods," says Sian Porter, consultant dietician and BDA spokesperson. "The aim isn't to make people feel guilty about indulging at this time of year, it's merely to outline the amount of calories that can get consumed and share a few tips people may want to take up, to temper their Christmas eating and drinking.

"This time of year, it's so easy to unwittingly consume a lot more calories than normal," she adds. "Make plans to get yourself and the family active - dancing, shopping and post-meal walks all will help to burn off some calories."

Sensible steps like these are far more achievable - and usually far better for us - than many of the more extreme fad diets doing the rounds.

Porter says the BDA's received numerous enquiries about different diets this year, ranging from the weird to the dangerous - such as the 'Breatharian Diet', which asks people to live on fresh air and sunlight alone!

"It seems we're constantly on the search for that magic bullet approach to losing weight, wanting a quick-fix to give us the bodies we so often see on TV, in magazines and adorning billboards," she says. "Quite often, the fad diets come at a price."

That's the potential cost to your health, for starters, but often there's a financial cost too, from the accompanying books, products, paid-for memberships or online services.

"The truth is, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is," Porter warns.

Permanent, sensible changes are what the experts advise, if you want to lose weight and keep it off, and not quick-fixes or extreme short-term plans.

"An eating pattern for life should be one you can stick to, and include enjoyment, a rich variety of foods in appropriate portion sizes, and moderation. Go for the marathon approach rather than the sprint finish," Porter advises.

"Many people will be making New Year resolutions to lose weight. Make the difference this time by losing it in a safe, robust and sustainable way."

DITCH THE FADS

Here are four trendy diets the BDA says people should avoid:

The Paleo Diet

Miley Cyrus and Matthew McConaughey have reportedly tried the paleo plan, also known as the Paleolithic, Caveman and Stone Age Diet. Only foods thought to be available to Neanderthals in the prehistoric era are allowed, and all other foods - like dairy products, grains, sugar, legumes, processed oils, salt, and drinks like coffee and alcohol - are excluded.

However, the BDA says that while eating fewer processed foods and less sugar and salt is a good idea, there's no need to cut any food group out of your diet entirely, unless advised to do so for medical reasons. In fact, cutting dairy completely without very careful substitution, the experts warn, could compromise bone health.

"An unbalanced, time-consuming, socially isolating diet, which this could easily be, is a sure-fire way to develop nutrient deficiencies which can compromise health and your relationship with food," stresses Porter.

The Sugar-free Diet

As well as banishing the white stuff from the menu, sugar-free diets - reportedly tried by the likes of Tom Hanks and Alec Baldwin - often ban carbohydrates too, as these are turned into glucose in the body.

But although the BDA encourages reducing added sugar, and sugar-loaded processed foods and desserts, it points out that some versions of this diet demand followers cut out all sugar, which is extremely limiting and, potentially, unhealthy.

"This is not only almost impossible," says Porter, "but would mean cutting out foods like vegetables, fruit, dairy products and nuts - not exactly a healthy, balanced diet."

Also, substitutes some sugar-free diet plans recommend, such as agave, palm sugar or honey, are actually just sugar in another form, and therefore using them is "a huge contradiction".

The VB6 Diet

Beyonce has reportedly tried this diet, so-named because it's about being vegan before 6pm. But after 6pm, nothing, within reason, is off limits.

The BDA says that while it's good that VB6 dieters eat less processed food, and more plant-based foods like beans, pulses, wholegrains, nuts, fruit and vegetables, being vegan doesn't automatically translate into eating healthily.

Porter says: "The danger is that post-6pm becomes a window of opportunity to hoover up a myriad of foods high in calories, saturated fat and packed with added salt and sugar, undoing your earlier healthier choices.

"The reality is, eating different food groups at different times of the day doesn't matter - in terms of your health, it's nutritional balance that's important."

The Clay Cleanse Diet

This diet claims a spoon of clay a day will remove toxins and negative isotopes from the body, helping you cleanse and stay in shape.

Actress Zoe Kravitz has reportedly tried it.

However, stay away from the clay, is the advice of the BDA, who point out that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) issued a warning about the dangers of consuming clay, particularly for pregnant women, after high levels of lead and arsenic were discovered in some products. In fact, the whole idea of detox is "nonsense", and the body has its own built-in mechanisms to remove waste and toxins.

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New Year, new home?

MANY people will have made it their New Year's resolution to finally make that move they've been dreaming of over the holiday period.

Whether you are looking to move to a bigger home for your expanding family, to downsize now that the kids have flown the nest, or just to relocate to that idyllic country village that you've been fantasising about for years, now could be the perfect time.
One positive about deciding to house-hunt in January is that many other homeowners are sure to have made the same decision as you. This means that there are likely to be lots of new properties coming on to the market, giving you plenty to choose from. On the down side of course, that means more competition with other prospective buyers, but there are a few things that you can do to make the whole process of buying a new home as hassle-free (and maybe even enjoyable!) as possible:

1: Work out the finances: Get a realistic valuation of the property that you are selling (the best advice is to consult three estate agents and go with whichever one gives you what you believe to be the most realistic and ACHIEVABLE suggested price). Use that, your income and any savings to get an idea of how much you will be able to afford on buying a property. Use an independent mortgage adviser, work out a realistic budget and stick to it.

2: Work out what and where: Write a must-have list for the property that you are looking for. How many bedrooms? Location? Garden? Price? Work out which things you could compromise on, and which are non-negotiable.

3: Get looking: Talk to local estate agents. Let them know what you're looking for. Read Property News each Thursday, and check property search websites. If in doubt, arrange a viewing.

4: Make that offer: If you find The One, don't hang around! In this competitive buyers' market, you need to make an offer fast.
Happy homehunting and good luck. Perhaps by the start of the next New Year, you will be happily settled in your dream home.

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HELPING YOU TO PLAN YOUR YEAR AHEAD

Grown Up Gap Year

Do you sometimes feel like abandoning the UK and heading somewhere new but don't do it because you're much too old for all that nonsense? Well think again.

Each year, over 2.5 million young people take a gap year before starting university and travel abroad to savour their first taste of freedom. Good for them. But on the whole, as a nation, we're far less adventurous with 55% of us not leaving the country at all in 2014.
Graeme Descoteaux is Store Manager at leading round the world specialists STA Travel, Cambridge and thinks he's spotted a trend emerging for a more 'grown up' gap year. He says, "Over the past few years there has definitely been an increase in professional people, couples, families and older individuals veering away from typical package holidays to Europe and instead travelling further afield on career breaks or extended holidays from their employment."
Graeme continues, "Thinking back to my parents day it was quite uncommon to leave Europe, apart from maybe the odd trip to Disneyland Florida, but things are changing. It's now so easy to travel to anywhere in the world and not even that expensive."
Jenny Risk, 45, has worked at STA Travel for 20 years. She agrees with Graeme saying, "I have definitely noticed a trend for older people looking to do bigger and longer trips with their time off. There's more of an awareness and appetite for what's out there. Plus the world is so much more accessible than it was 20 years ago." Jenny herself recently took an extended break and went to Australia telling us, "I had some extra holiday to take so decided to do a big trip, travelling from Perth, to Margaret River, to Tasmania and ending in Sydney."
Older travelers are just as hardy as the youngsters too and Graeme says, "You'd be surprised how little the grown-ups care about staying in hotels rather than hostel accommodation. It depends on the destination but generally people don't want to travel round in a bubble of air conditioned coaches or private buses and are looking for a raw and authentic experience."

So what are you waiting for? Here are some ideas for your grown-up gap year…

Volunteering
Spend time helping on an overseas project such as the Thai Elephant Conservation, Chang Mai, Thailand. This peaceful home for more than 30 neglected and abused elephants is set in a forested valley and you will be there to feed and care for the elephants.
From £399 for 1-8 weeks.

Working Holiday
If you want to work aboard in Australia, New Zealand, Canada or the USA, there are plenty of options although, Graeme says, "In some places, working holidays are only available for people up to the age of 31 due to visa restrictions".

India
Why not visit the world's most ancient culture? Graeme says, "India is quite an inexpensive place to get to and to travel round". STA Travel have a whole team dedicated just to this country and you can tailor make your trip to ensure you take in all the sights and stay safe.
From £599 a trip suggestion is to travel from the UK to Delhi, overland to Goa and back to the UK.

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Things to consider before you book:
Your budget. Can you afford to leave work and pay for the trip? There's no point in going away for a year of bliss only to return to a financial mess.

Your home. If you're planning to come back one day there are plenty of options from house sitting, house swaps and renting so you can leave your home in safe hands.
Creature comforts. Can you handle living in a tent or taking a cold shower? Be realistic about what you're prepared to put up with before you get to the jungle and realise that you're terrified of bugs.
Vaccinations. Depending on what countries you're headed to, find out what vaccinations you need by visiting **nhs.uk/conditions/travel-immunisations**.

Sacrifices. If you're away for a while, it's likely you'll miss some things back home like weddings, birthdays and even Christmases. Make sure you're prepared for the sacrifices.
Taking children out of school. You can read the guidelines at gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview. If you're away for a long time, you'll need to make education arrangements.

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Advertisement Feature

1st January 2015

A New Year Message from Nigel Farage

Dear People of Northampton,

2015 will be a time of change. For the first time there is a good chance you will elect a UKIP candidate as your next MP.

Both Michael Ellis and Sally Keeble, your MPs for the past 17 years, are excellent people and have done a great job for the people of Northampton North.

But the change that is coming is not a reflection of the good work Michael and Sally have done but just the people's desire for a new approach to politics that is happening not only in Northampton but all over Britain.

There are many reasons for this. UKIP is the only party that has firm, workable and solid ideas for improving the service you get from Northampton General Hospital. UKIP also wants to have a debate about the incredible expansion of Northampton that is currently seeing the local population grow by as much as three to four per cent a year, something that quite frankly is unsustainable.

Don't get me wrong, UKIP is not against progress but it is against mindless progress, where everything gets bigger just for the sake of it. You will have noticed the traffic chaos that is engulfing Northampton caused by over expansion - someone has to call for some common sense thinking to a process that threatens the whole way of life of Northampton's citizens.

UKIP is the party that will bring true democracy to Northampton people. We will instigate local referendums so you, not civil servants in London, can decide the future of your town.

One thing I can promise you - after May 2015, your UKIP MP will put party politics aside and fight tooth and nail for all of the 65,000 citizens of Northampton North, regardless of who they are, what their backgrounds are, where they came from or who they voted for.

UKIP is a party of all the people for all the people, a notion that has largely been forgotten in politics these past 50 years.

Thanks for reading this and I am looking forward to visiting Northampton soon.

Nigel Farage MEP

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Women seeking men

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SLIM single female, 30's, seeks male for friendship and outings. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415713**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399**

SAM 32yrs petite pretty seeking genuine good hearted male for loving relationship. If you're out there please call and restore my faith in dating. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415413**

LUCY, 32yrs, blonde lady seeks naughty boys of any age for no strings fun. **Tel No: 0905 002 1887 Box No: 413443**

JUDITH attractive curvy sensual black lady seeking kind genuine mature male companion for adult fun, meals in/out and passionate weekends home or away. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415397**

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301**

JENNY 38, petite, blonde busty, looking for my sugar daddy, GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415311**

LUCY, broadminded 18yrs seeks discreet fun with men any age. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1941 Box No: 365051**

DOREEN 40's attractive blonde, nice figure, solvent, OHAC, no ties, enjoys keeping fit, holidays away, WLTM someone to share all the good things in life with. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415383**

SEXY brunette, mid 20's busty, adventurous broad minded seeks no strings fun. **Tel No: 0905 002 1949 Box No: 361739**

JENNY 38yr old attractive divorced mum of one, green eyes, blonde, interesting with varied interests, WLTM genuine kind male for hopeful romance. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415189**

SALLY, 38yrs large cuddly lady seeks slim men for discreet meetings. **Text Only 4550193**

CAROLINE 24yr old blonde slim beautiful, active, fun European female looking for kind, cuddly loving man for romantic companionship. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415565**

TRUDY 36yrs, wltm broadminded men of any age/area for daytime meetings. **Text Only 4550194**

SHELIA attractive natural blonde curvy female looking for nice guy to share good times with and to make my life complete. Call/text me. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415541**

MELANIE, 38, slim, blonde and bored. Call if you want no strings fun. **Text Only 4550198**

KATHY 35yr old outgoing female looking for casual dates with fun guy who has no hang ups or complications. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415517**

JENNI, 52 bored housewife wants no strings fun with younger chap. **Text Only 4550197**

LEANNE black open-minded female looking for white male for adult fun times. discretion assured/required. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415511**

WIDOW 78, N/S, house owner, seeks genuine gent of similar age for companionship. Ipswich area. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414743**

SOPHIE 29yr old large black lady with very large bust looking for professional or retired naughty friend with GSOH, discreet disposition and generous nature. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415171**

SANDY part time nurse, loves holidays, dancing, walking, nights in/out, seeks mature male to enjoy weekend activities and adult romance. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414971**

JEN first time advertiser and a little shy, single mum looking for nice guy for chats, to go out and generally just enjoy life with, N/S preferred. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414965**

ABI single fun outgoing young 27yrs, tall, slim, OHAC, employed looking for similar male for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414369**

ATTRACTIVE Princess, 50, likes music, good things in life, seeking Prince charming with GSOH, honest and generous to bring happiness and love. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414791**

CHARLIE 22yr old young female looking for older male for fun times only, no complications or questions asked. Reliability and respect expected and assured. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414947**

BEA petite 40's female, attractive, nice natured, social, many likes and interests, seeking independent male to share new interests, hobbies and lots of adult time. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414943**

CLARE 26, fun, honest, loving and loyal, employed, no ties, OHAC, seeks genuine man 25-50yrs to get to know, spend quality times, dates in/out and great conversation. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414393**

SARAH 20yr old attractive blonde, medium height, size 10, busty, tanned, fun, looking for male, any age, for text chats, meets and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414483**

SHY 38yr old pretty slim female looking for sensitive male who is looking for some adult fun. Any age/looks race or status. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414371**

NINA 35yrs pretty brunette, slim, medium height, nice smile, good manners, loves girlie things, cooking, shopping, dancing, meals in/out, WLTM affectionate passionate guy. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414233**

JEAN 46, petite, well mannered, employed, OHAC, enjoys meals out, nice wine, golf, gardening, holidays, seeks 60's kind man with GSOH. Looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414221**

PAM 42, attractive employed, slim, fit, interesting brunette, OHAC, seeking similar sporty, fun N/S male for weekends away, meals out and lots of laughs. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414197**

FIONA 32yr old female looking for professional sincere honest guy to enjoy the company of and see where it takes us. Age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413001**

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PLAIN Jane 38yrs true country lass looking for fun frolics down on the farm with real non pretentious happy man, there must be one out there for me! **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414693**

TALL lovely lady 50's, long hair, likes pina colada and getting caught in the rain, seeks genuine, loyal, homely man with GSOH and 6ft in height. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414575**

LYNDA 19yr old naughty by nature female green eyes, dark hair looking for fun times with mature male who thinks he can handle a real live wire. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414719**

PRETTY 34yr old paramedic, long dark hair, nice eyed, feminine, size 12, caring, looking for fun times in or out with nice guy, maybe leading to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414715**

ANN pretty blonde, young looking, slim, no ties, seeking male 40-50's to go out with, enjoy adult conversation, maybe leading to something more. Pls call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414503**

SOPHIE wanting to fall in love, attractive 34yr old single female looking for real romantic male who is not afraid to fall in love. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412375**

KAREN lonely 47yr old social female, size 16, not very tall but big on personality, likes cinema, football, looking for some male company, ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414183**

KAREN 40's curvy size 16 female, many interests including sport, reading, looking for a real man who can handle a real woman for dates in/out and text chats. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413871**

ZOE 31, blonde blue eyed easygoing single mum of one seeking fun guy with GSOH for relationship, some adult conversation and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413583**

KATHY 37, gorgeous mixed race single female, 5ft 8ins, slim, sensual, just looking for kind, trustworthy guy any age, looks or race. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413395**

JULIE very attractive 18yrs seeking loving caring honest male for possible relationship, no time wasters pls, I am genuinely looking for love. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413455**

BEAUTIFUL Spanish senorita, new to the UK, single and very lonely, looking for kind caring older male to share cuddles and quality times with. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413413**

FEMALE 72, seeking gent, 72-76 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 409767**

DEBS single with no ties, OHAC, normal, passionate, romantic, just missing that special man in my life to enjoy good wine, music, great conversations, if your him, call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413203**

PROFESSIONAL lady, widow, 5ft 7ins, likes music, meals out, nights in, seeking honest, genuine, kind male, N/S, 69-74 for friendship, maybe more. Suffolk. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413175**

SUE 38yrs enjoys most things, meals in/out, easygoing, broadminded, passionate, slightly feisty, looking for adult fun, call me if you're interested in spicing things up. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413007**

SARAH petite very attractive 19yr old female seeking older mature guy chat with and take it from there. Give me a call, I promise you won't be disappointed. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412905**

BEV green eyed outgoing female with a good personality, loves travel, weekends away looking for genuine man to share some good times with and heat things up a bit. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412587**

SANDY fun bubbly very attractive outgoing female who loves to have fun and be spoilt looking for a good looking toy boy for adult fun times and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412585**

LAUREN 38yrs pretty petite slim blonde, big eyes/smile, likes animals, walking, theatre, quiet nights in with a red, WLTM male 35-42 with GSOH for nice times together. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412353**

JULIE attractive loving female who gives much more than she takes, big eyes, curvy and very feminine, great cook, WLTM 50 plus loving male. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412391**

NICKY 38yr old shy sensitive feminine female seeking caring sensitive male to enjoy adult fun times. Any age/looks or status. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412381**

BERNIE blue eyed blonde employed female who's interests include eating out, cinema, reading, socialising, seeks manly male for friendship, hopefully ltr. ACA. **Tel No: 0907 308 0272 Box No: 411701**

DEBS single fun loving attractive slim female who likes to keep fit, enjoys sport, restaurants, shopping, WLTM similar male for potential dates and romancing. **Tel No: 0907 308 0272 Box No: 411533**

PAT 37, 5ft 7ins slim attractive, busy lifestyle, no time for wining/dining or any complications, looking for similar understanding man for fun times. **Tel No: 0907 308 0272 Box No: 411525**

WHERE have all the good single men gone? enjoy cinema, nights out, wining/dining, seeking special male for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 411391**

JEAN country loving female petite 5ft 4ins, feminine, sensual, tactile, looking for genuine companion with similar interests and passionate nature. **0906 500 5817 Box No: 411047**

Men seeking women

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras.

FUN loving easy going guy, good looking, 5ft 10ins, stocky, seeks female. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415581**

JAMES, hard working single dad, late 30's seeks single mum for family days out. **Text Only 4550196**

GEOFF looking for female companion, 40-60 to go sailing on my catamaran in the Mediterranean. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414857**

GARY 55, looking for female, 45-55, likes nights out, romantic dinners etc. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415557**

JOHN, 42yrs professional genuine gent seeks caring lady to treat as a princess. **Text Only 4550195**

ATTRACTIVE tall fit guy, 50, dark hair, fun, romantic, passionate, seeks sexy lady for fun dates, laughter and good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415387**

GENUINE attractive and honest single 32 yr old male looking for fun and friendship. All replies answered, **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4504483**

HUNKY builder, 50, adventurous but kind, seeks female for fun, friendship and LTR. Black/white/Asian. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415357**

FIT 39yr old Ipswich male, seeks special female for mistletoe kisses and lasting relationship, OHAC. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415615**

GOOD catch looking to get caught, easy going professional guy 46, OHAC, seeking lovely lady for relationship. Ipswich area. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415589**

SILVER haired 59yr old male, 5ft 9ins, good looking, solvent, seeks slim lady, 50-60 to see how it goes, hopefully LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415329**

TALL slim, young 50 something male, longish hair, GSOH, likes rock/indie music, seeks lady for friendship, hopefully relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415257**

MALE mid 60's, 5ft 5ins, medium build, N/S, GSOH, likes most things, country walks, meals out, theatre, cinema, seeks female up to 68. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415337**

PROFESSIONAL male, N/S, own home/business, solvent, smart, attractive, romantic, loving personality, GSOH, seeking LTR with genuine female. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415353**

CEMENT to be! Builder seeking concrete relationship with fun loving female. Children/pets welcome, any age/race. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415215**

JAMIE 50, OHAC, widowed, seeking female to socialise with, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415197**

MALE likes rock/pop/indie, tall, slim, young 50 something, GSOH, honest, caring, romantic, non materialistic, seeks genuine lady for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415059**

59YR old male, silver hair, reasonable build, seeks slim lady, 50ish. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414989**

KIND male, 49, likes cinema, meals out, concerts, travel, seeks loving lady, 38-52 for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414913**

JOHN 36, easy going, GSOH, 6ft 3ins, likes comedy, music, seeking nice lady for fun and laughter. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414829**

NICE looking guy 50, dark hair, hazel eyes, GSOH, likes walks, meals out, seeks attractive lady for wining/dining and romancing. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414823**

DEAN 5ft 10ins, medium build, nice, gentle, genuine, loving, funny, outgoing, energetic, likes nights in/out, seeks similar female. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414277**

DAN 50, nice looking, athletic, good company, seeks slim, attractive, broadminded, adventurous female for discreet exciting meetings. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414671**

JAMIE 50, OHAC, widowed, works some nights, seeking female for uncomplicated friendship and nights out. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414611**

MID 50's Ipswich male, seeks smart, older lady for daytime adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414455**

CARING male, 41, looking for fun and laughter, seeking female, 30-48 for loving lasting relationship with GSOH and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414357**

NICE working guy, 50, tall, athletic, dark hair, fun, romantic, caring, seeking attractive lady for friendship and fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414349**

DEAN 5ft 10ins, average build, nice, gentle, genuine, loving, funny, outgoing, likes nights in/out, seeks similar female. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414277**

GENUINE 70yr old gent, caring, honest, likes DIY, gardening, meals out, travel, home life, seeks lady with similar interests for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 414129**

FIT trendy caring 39yr old Ipswich male, OHAC, looking for love, seeks female for lasting relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413943**

MALE 49, young looking, seeking female, 25-50. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413759**

BILL 74, caring, loving, honest, affectionate, likes DIY, gardening, cinema, countryside, seaside, seeks female of similar age for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413473**

IPSWICH male, early 70's, loving, caring, likes trips/meals out, nights in, seeks attractive loving lady, 60-70 for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413381**

YOUTHFUL fit, attractive guy, 50, humorous, romantic, passionate, likes red wine, walks, meals out, cinema, seeking sexy, like minded female for fun and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413259**

MALE 50's, ok looking, seeking female for no strings adventurous fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413431**

GENUINE male, young 56, OHAC, kind, caring, loyal, considerate, country loving, seeks attractive female with GSOH for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 413091**

MIKE 59, outgoing, likes walks, seeks female of similar age and GSOH for company. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 412879**

Men seeking men

FIT 55yr old male, seeks CD/TV for fun and games. Suffolk. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415607**

Male 60 seeks cd male for fun times. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4311477**

SINGLE male, likes mopeds, seeks elderly gent for rides in the countryside. **Tel No: 0906 500 5817 Box No: 415223**

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Northern Soul	27-29 & 10.30am 30 Dec
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The Grandmaster	9-10 Jan
Winter Sleep	11 Jan@8pm
St Vincent	12-15 Jan*
The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies	16-20 Jan
The Homesman	21-22 Jan
Theory Of Everything	23-29 Jan
Big Eyes	30 Jan – 5 Feb*
Wild	6-12 Feb

Kids Screen Films at 2.30pm

Penguins of Madagascar	20-23 & 27-28 Dec*
Bedknobs and Broomsticks	30 Dec & 10.30am 31 Dec
Paddington	2&5 Jan & 10.30am 3 Jan
Hunger Games The Mockingjay	3-4 Jan
Book of Life	10-11 Jan
Alexander and the ... Very Bad Day	17 Jan@10.30am & 18 Jan
Tinkerbell & The Neverbeast	24-25 Jan
Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb	31 Jan & 1 Feb
Disney's Cinderella	7-8 Feb

Most films start at 7.30pm or 8pm Mon to Sat & 6.45pm Sun
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Like many publishers, we will be reviewing the way we distribute newspapers in 2015. The way in which people consume media is changing, and as a business we must reflect this. It has been necessary to examine our current traditional distribution method which is solely reliant on Door to Door. From January we will be replacing some door to door distribution in certain areas with copies available to pick up for free at local supermarkets, including Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, Co-op, Morrisons and non-traditional outlets. This will enable people to pick up a copy at their convenience and has already proved a very popular method of getting our newspapers to the community in other areas. Quite rightly it has been pointed out that the historic door to door distribution can result in some wastage. By making them available where people spend their lives, someone picking up a copy voluntarily is clearly showing a desire to read the newspaper we produce. This is a much more convenient and targeted way of providing news, information and advertising to our audience.

We will be constantly reviewing this throughout January and looking at locations where we can drop some copies.

So if you know of a suitable location please tell us and we will put this forward for consideration.

Please contact distributionqueriesnorthampton@localworld.co.uk or call the Bedford reception on 01234 304 403

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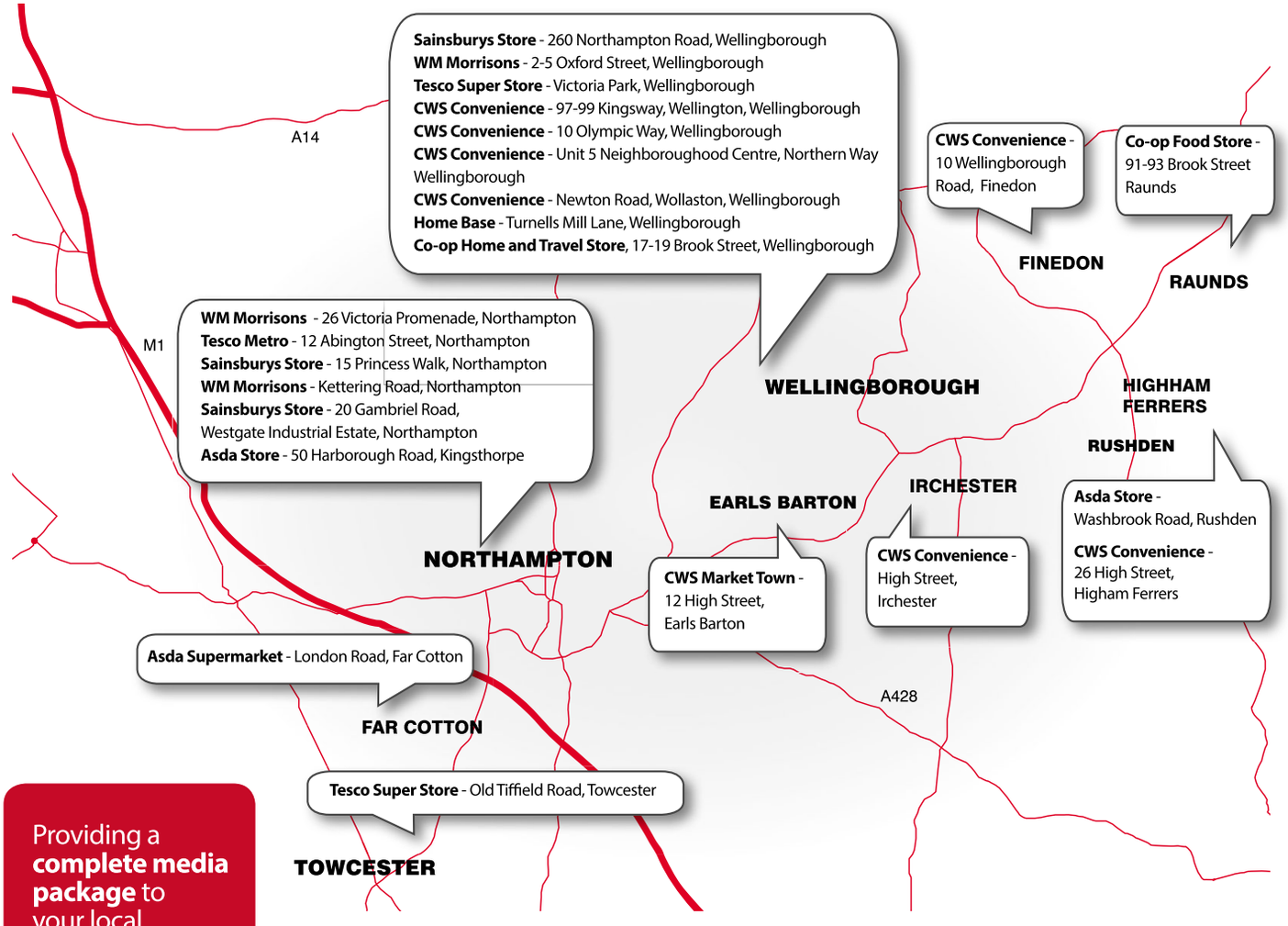

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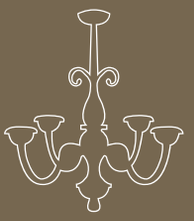

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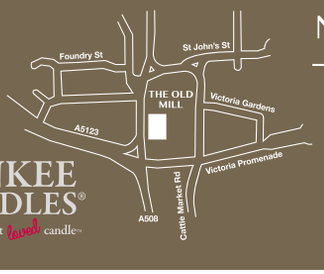

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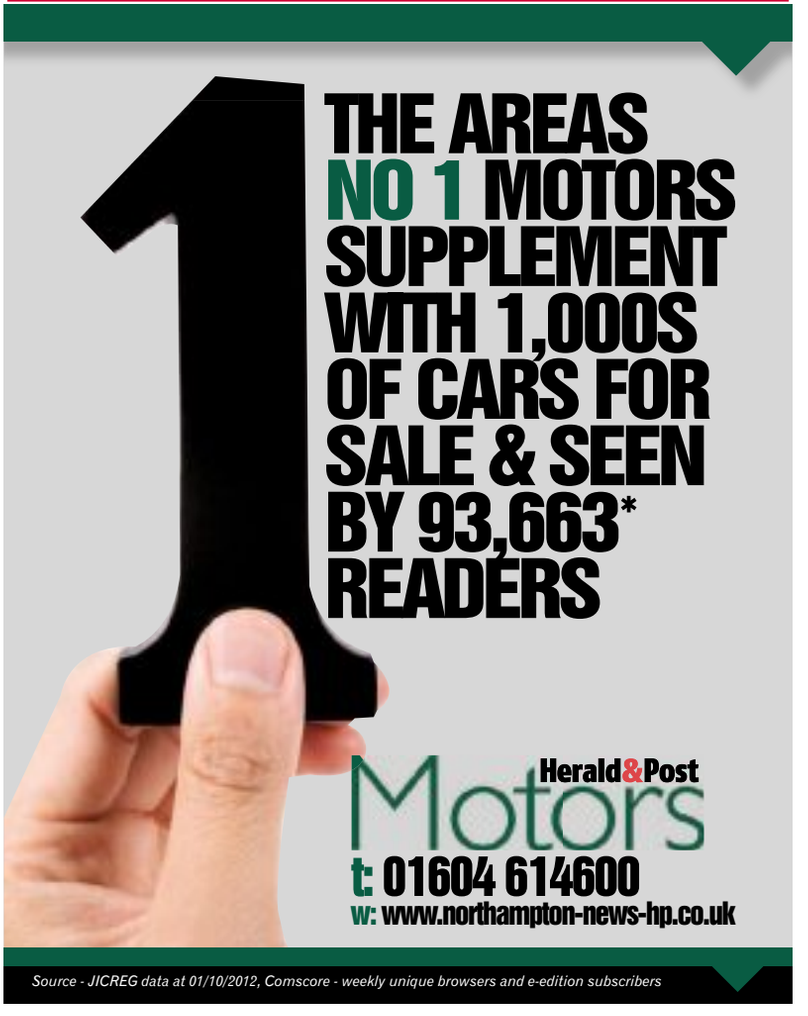

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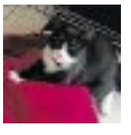

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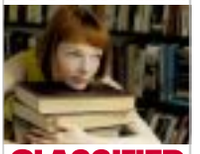

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Public Notices

HIGHWAYS AGENCY

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984-SECTION 14(1)(A)
THE A45 TRUNK ROAD (WOOTTON – GREAT BILLING, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE)
(TEMPORARY RESTRICTION AND PROHIBITION OF TRAFFIC) ORDER 2015

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Secretary of State for Transport intends to make an order on the A45 Trunk Road, between Wootton and Great Billing in the County of Northamptonshire, to allow resurfacing and associated maintenance works to be carried out.

The effect of the Order will be to –

(1) impose a 50 miles per hour speed restriction on the northbound and southbound carriageways of the A45 between the centrepoint of Wooldale Road overbridge at Wootton and the centrepoint of the roundabout junction with the A5076 Great Billing Way and Crow Lane (Great Billing Interchange);

(2) close, at different times –
- (a) the northbound carriageway of the A45 from the junction with the slip road leading to the roundabout junction with Caswell Road and Eagle Drive (Brackmills Interchange), to the junction with the slip road leading from the roundabout junction with the A428 and the A5095 Rushmere Road (Barnes Meadow Interchange);
- (b) the northbound carriageway of the A45 from the junction with the slip road leading to Barnes Meadow Interchange, to the junction with the slip road leading from the roundabout junction with the A43 Lumbertubs Way and Ferris Row (Weston Favell Interchange);
- (c) the southbound carriageway of the A45 from the junction with the slip road leading to Barnes Meadow Interchange, to the junction with the slip road leading to Brackmills Interchange; and
- (d) the southbound carriageway of the A45 from the junction with the slip road leading to the roundabout junction with the A5076, A508 London Road and the B526 Newport Pagnell Road (Queen Eleanor Interchange), to the centreline of the junction with High Street, at Wootton; and
- (e) the slip roads leading –
  - (i) from and to the northbound carriageway of the A45 at –
    - a. Brackmills Interchange;
    - b. Barnes Meadow Interchange; and
    - c. Weston Favell Interchange;
  - (ii) to the southbound carriageway of the A45 from –
    - a. Weston Favell Interchange;
    - b. Brackmills Interchange; and
    - c. Queen Eleanor Interchange.

The work will be carried out overnight between 20:00 hours and 06:00 hours and is expected to start on Monday 26 January 2015 and continue for approximately three months. The Order will come into force on Monday 19 January 2015.

Vehicles being used for special forces purposes will be exempt from the speed restriction. Vehicles being used for police, fire brigade or ambulance purposes will be exempt from the speed restriction and closures. Vehicles being used in connection with the works will be exempt from the closures.

Diversion routes via Caswell Road, Rhosilli Road, Salthouse Road, Buryport Road, Liliput Road and the A428; the A5095 and the A4500; the A5076, A5123, M1 Junction 15a and M1 Junction 15; or via alternative junctions of the A45, will be signed.

For further information, please contact Sharon Liu, a Project Manager on behalf of the Highways Agency, on 01623 886 559.

Mike Lloyd, a Higher Executive Officer in the Highways Agency.

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TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) ORDER 2010
NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 13
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990
APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

N/2014/1398 **Aldi Supermarket, 582 - 592 Wellingborough Road**
Application for variation of condition 9 of application N/2011/0295 to allow the store to accept deliveries between 7:00am & 8:00pm Monday to Saturday and 9:00am to 4:00pm on Sundays, bank holidays and public holidays. Major Application.

N/2014/1414 **Norbert Dentressangle (Area 5) Lodge Way**
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Members of the public may inspect copies of the application, plans and any other documentation submitted at the One Stop Shop, Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE during all reasonable office hours. Plans can also be viewed on-line at www.northampton.gov.uk, click on 'planning' and then 'planning search facility'. Anyone who wishes to make representations about these applications should write to the Planning Division, Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE or email planning@northampton.gov.uk by 28/01/2015

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Wilder eyes January sales as he aims to stop slide to bottom two

COBBLERS

BY DAN PALMER
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Cobblers boss Chris Wilder hopes to bring in 'two or three' new players in the January transfer window as he aims to reverse his club's alarming slide towards the League Two relegation zone.

Wilder replaced the sacked Aidy Boothroyd at Sixfields on January 27 of this year with the club bottom of the Football League but after successfully steering his charges to safety Northampton are now dangerously close to another basement battle.

An awful return of five defeats from their last five League Two games has seen them slip to 20th in the division and just two places above the bottom two trapdoor.

The boss believes new additions are required to engineer a revival in fortunes and has repeated his pledge to move on his under-performers.

He has also been backed by his chairman David Cardoza following the recent slump.

"We want to bring two or three players in and I've spoken to the chairman about that but I also understand that we may have to move some players out," Wilder said.

"We've given a lot of opportunities to players and I've got to say a lot of them haven't stuck their hand up to stake a claim.

"We've had a couple of calls about our players but it's important that we get a few players in to boost us and give everybody a lift.

"We need strong characters and we need to get through this season and get to 50 points as quickly as possible. We need players with a winning mentality and we will make those additions accordingly."

After losing all of their festive fixtures, including two in three days against Bury and Tranmere Rovers, Northampton return to league action by hosting Southend United on Saturday – a side who beat the Cobblers 2-0 in the corresponding fixture as recently as November 29.

"We can win and we have to believe that we can win," Wilder said. "We ended 2014 on a poor note and we can't hide from the fact that for the last couple of months results have been really disappointing.

"All the games have been tight but as I've said before we need to be better and more ruthless in both boxes.

"The fans have been different class and I think they can see the effort that is going in.

"We need to keep that going and make sure we make better decisions in key areas.

"The fans want us to do well and we are desperate to do well for them."

Defensive pair Zander Diamond and Gregor Robertson, who both had to be substituted during the first half of Sunday's 2-1 defeat at Tranmere, will both miss the Southend game with Diamond out for two to four weeks with a rib injury.

FESTIVE GLOOM: John-Joe O'Toole, who has returned from his loan at Southend, in action at Tranmere. Picture: Andy Kearns

Opinion: Cobblers' nightmare around Christmas

COBBLERS

BY TOM REED
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Columnist Tom Reed's thoughts after the festive defeats to Bury and Tranmere

Northampton's nightmare before Christmas continued past Boxing Day with back-to-back defeats piling pressure on Cobblers boss Chris Wilder.

Northampton have shown themselves multi-talented at losing, being beaten by promotion hopefuls Plymouth Argyle and relegation candidates Carlisle United alike before succumbing to Bury and Tranmere Rovers in the space of three days.

The Boxing Day 3-2 Bury defeat was marked by the typical soft goals and token fight-back that characterises Northampton's season. Cobblers took the lead against David Flitcroft's Shakers through Marc Richards but were pegged back via a Andrew Tutte long shot and then the obligatory free header from Tom Soares. Post-match, Wilder talked of his confidence that his players weren't 'pulling out' of tackles and headers, which is true because they barely attempted any.

Danny Mayor put the tin hat on the Bury romp with a six-yard box turn past Ben Tozer, who resembled a drunken llama being taught the soft shoe-shuffle, and an arrowed shot into the roof of Matt Duke's net.

Chris Hackett scored direct from a corner but the match was the seventh time this season Cobblers have conceded three or more goals. Events worsened after a two day turnaround with Northampton going down 2-1 to relegation fodder Tranmere.

Defeat was more galling given-Cobblers enjoyed decent spells of possession at Prenton Park but dominant ball work is futile when accompanied by weak defending.

The lumbering Kayode Odejayi somehow got himself in front of his marker for Rovers' 32nd minute opener and Jake Kirby secured the points for the home side with a side footed take past Duke. Tranmere's goals sandwiched a 44th minute Marc Richards equaliser, the Northampton forward somehow (for a struggling team) top scorer in the division with 12 goals.

No surprise then that Northampton fans' mood darkened with 350 braving a snarled up M6 to see their side leave the Wirral only a couple of points outside the bottom two.Unusually for such a situation, there is no clear focus of blame for Cobblers' woes. Manager, players and chairman are all under the spotlight in what could turn out to be the Sixfields club's third brush with relegation in four years.

Lose on Saturday at home to Southend United and terrace opinion is that Chris Wilder could be in real trouble.

NOT ALL-WHITE: Tranmere celebrate scoring against Northampton. Picture: Andy Kearns

With echoes of Gary Johnson's decision to transfer list ten players before Christmas, Wilder admitted that he had told 'some of the players that they are free to go' with the agents of some having done 'an outstanding job to get them contracts here'. However, this might prove problematic since playing hard ball with players can result in 'losing the dressing room'.

Wilder may be banking on a January cash injection from the sale of Ivan Toney and, in that case, there is potential for tossing aside bad apples that make a locker room stink.

Wilder's predicament could be eased by the fact that firing him could put chairman David Cardoza's leadership under further scrutiny with several failed managers and a stalled redevelopment on his C.V.

One extreme line of thought is that relegation to the Conference, after years of teetering on the brink, may be what the club deserves. With chronic poor performances on the pitch and an archaic idea of fan engagement, the suspicion that the Cobblers are an add-on to a land deal persists. This argument runs that the loss of league status would focus minds on the purely footballing issues.

Such issues might involve problems of inadequate training facilities, uncoordinated coaching, scouting and youth development, a fragmented transfer policy and the lack of a multi skilled project manager to connect the various strands of building a club that fans and players alike buy into.

Contrasting the Cobblers' customer-base engagement with fan-owned clubs like AFC Wimbledon and stadium construction consultation with the comprehensive liaison at Scunthorpe's new-build for instance would flag up wider issues than what may or may not be a bunch of players, as Gary Johnson would put it, 'nicking a living'.

The arguments in favour of Conference relegation are tempting but unrealistic, however. It would surely be better to preserve our precious league status and build a club worthy of a redevelopment a decade in the making. Whether that means employing a supporter savvy CEO and a director of football is another headache for the New Year.

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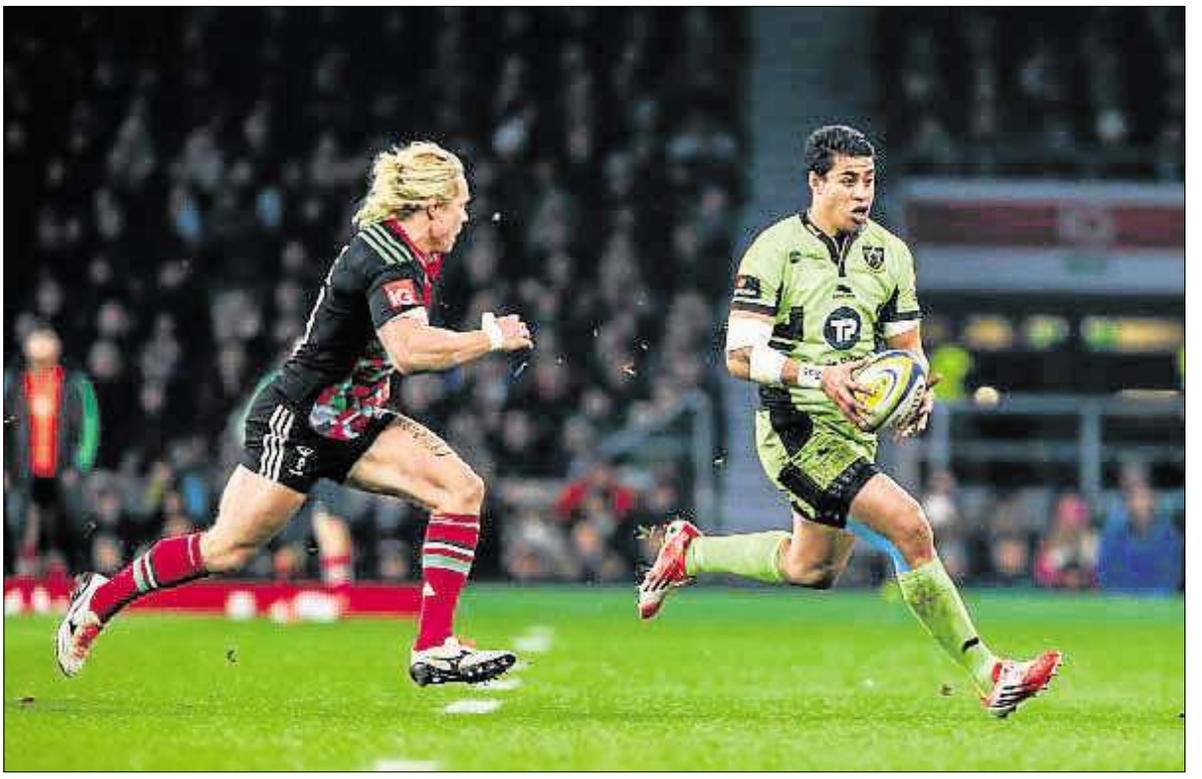

HARING AWAY: George Pisi finds room to run against Harlequins at Twickenham. Picture: Andy Kearns

It's a case of quality over quantity at Twickenham

SAINTS

BY DAN PALMER
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Northampton director of rugby Jim Mallinder admitted it was a day for quality not quantity after the Saints kept their place at the top of the Aviva Premiership by seeing off Harlequins 30-25.

Saints, second ahead of kick-off for Big Game 7 at a sold out Twickenham after Bath Rugby's defeat of Exeter Chiefs, conceded the majority of possession to Quins but were defensively strong and clinical when it mattered.

Samu Manoa, off to French giants Toulon at the end of the season, scored one try and set up George North for another while Kahn Fotuali'i's 72nd-minute score proved decisive for Saints.

That's because Jack Clifford and replacement Sam Twomey rallied for Quins late in the second half with tries after George Lowe had started and finished off a sweeping move to give them a sixth-minute lead.

Stephen Myler converted all three of Northampton's tries as well as kicking three penalties while Tim Swiel slotted two from two for the Londoners with Mallinder brushing aside the statistics stacked in Quins' favour.

"It was very hard fought and, fair play to Harlequins, they attacked us for a full 80 minutes and in the first half defensively we were put under pressure and missed too many tackles," he said.

"But that is sometimes what happens when you are on the back foot.

"Harlequins ran really well and fortunately in the second half our set piece got on top, we didn't play too much but we kicked into the corner and kept things tight.

"Sometimes when you go away from home you don't have to play too much rugby and it is not all about how much ball you get, it is really what you do with it and that was our message at half-time.

"Even though we weren't happy with the performance, we knew we were in the lead and we knew we had a strong bench to come on and that was always going to help us in the second half.

"We're not over-impressed with our performance, it certainly wasn't one of our best. What's important is that you get the win, it's as simple as that.

"We've come here and got a win, and we'll take that."

Saints will go into 2015 sitting top of the Aviva Premiership table and host a Newcastle Falcons outfit that ran Saracens very close in round 11 tomorrow evening.

Only one point separates the champions from Bath in second place. Northampton will then travel to Sale on January 10.

Alex Waller is keen to build on 2014

GREAT YEAR: Alex Waller

SAINTS

BY CIARAN THOMAS
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As individual years go, 2014 hasn't been a bad one for Northampton Saints' home grown prop Alex Waller.

The 24-year-old scored the winning try at Twickenham in May as Saints lifted the Premiership title for the first time, and followed that with a first international call up with England for the summer tour to New Zealand.

He also joined the England training camp for the Six Nations as injury cover, but the Saints academy product is firmly keeping his feet on the ground, and aiming even higher for 2015.

"I've loved every minute of it," he said. "Obviously the end of last season, scoring the try, winning the Premiership with the lads and then being lucky enough to be selected to go on an international tour.

"Being out there, I just learnt so much with the lads, and this year I was asked to go down and cover when Joe [Marler] was injured.

"It's been good for me, I'm progressing and hopefully I can keep progressing at the same rate. I've still got a lot to learn and want to move forward, not resting on my laurels thinking I've made it.

"I'm still trying to work hard and find out how I can be the best player I can be, it's been a good year but hopefully the next one can be better."

Waller will go down in Saints history after being the man to score the dramatic try with the last play of extra-time as Saints beat Saracens in the Premiership Final in May.

On Saturday the team returned to the national stadium for the first time since that day, when they saw off Harlequins in front of a sold-out crowd at rugby HQ.

"Playing at Twickenham is a great occasion, you don't play there often in your career," Waller said.

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BACK IN BUSINESS: Alex Corbisiero at Twickenham Picture: Andy Kearns

It's good to be back

BY CIARAN THOMAS
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Northampton Saints prop Alex Corbisiero said he was delighted to make his first appearance for the club in over three months as he returned from injury against Harlequins on Saturday.

Corbisiero suffered a shoulder injury against Bath in September, but came off the bench for the final 20 minutes of the 30-25 victory at Twickenham.

The loose head said he now feels fully fit and healthy and is happy to be back involved in the squad. He also praised the way the club have taken their time with his rehab.

"I was delighted to be back out there and playing with the boys," he said. "Obviously to get the win, and on the stage of a packed Twickenham, it was a great way to come back.

"It's actually healed very quickly which is nice. Everyone was surprised with how quickly the healing process came on and at the same time we didn't want to push it and risk having a set back.

"They've handled me really well and have obviously got my best long term interest at heart, so that's good to know. To come back when you're fully fit, feeling strong and healthy is a nice feeling."

Corbisiero has won 19 caps for England and his return appears to be timely ahead of the Six Nations, which begin in just five weeks time.

However, the 26-year-old is only thinking about his club performances for the time being.

"You've got to take each game as it comes at the moment," he said.

"My focus right now is on club rugby, getting my form back and getting up to 100 per cent, not just physically but mentally and rugby wise. Hopefully that'll come over the next couple of games.

"That'll lead into some European games which will be nice and if I get an opportunity to put myself up for the national set up again I'd be very grateful but I'm not going to look too far ahead."

In his absence Saints have enjoyed a fantastic first half of the season and are currently top of the Premiership, but Corbisiero warned that will make them a scalp for other teams to target, starting with Newcastle Falcons on Friday night.

"We've capped off the year where we want to be," he said. "We're top of the league again and in the driver's seat, holding our own destiny in our hands.

"Now we look forward to these games, I think we're always a big scalp for teams and Newcastle have been very close to taking two big scalps in the last couple of weeks.

"They'll be looking to get one over on us so we've got to make sure we turn up, we play how we want to play and there's no complacency in our game."

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